

Pandemic Flu Fact Sheet

The Flu is Your Business

Preparing for a global pandemic flu outbreak is far beyond getting ready for a 72-hour disruption in your business or work environment. An outbreak will take weeks to run its course in your area. Businesses must have a plan in place NOW that defines essential and non-essential services within their community and a list of exactly who is to perform those services.

A business must be prepared to face high employer and employee absenteeism, extended cash flow interruption – yet need to meet continuing payroll and fixed expense obligations. With careful planning and taking preventive measures, businesses can turn a disaster into a manageable problem. Fortunately, there are simple, basic steps you can put in place now that will help reduce the spread of the flu, including supplying your office with anti-viral lotions. (These are different from anti-bacterial soap).

Please take the time to gather information, develop a plan and purchase needed supplies.

What is an Influenza Pandemic?

Pandemic influenza is a global outbreak of disease from a new influenza A virus that is unlike past flu viruses. Because people have not been infected with a similar virus in the past, most or all people will not have any natural immunity (protection) to a new pandemic virus.

Why is Pandemic Flu so serious?

Because most or all people would not have immunity to a new pandemic virus, large numbers of people around the world can be infected. If the pandemic virus is severe, many people may develop serious illnesses. Some of those who develop severe influenza will die.

Once a pandemic virus develops, it can spread rapidly, causing outbreaks around the world. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) predicts that as much as 25% to 30% of the US population could be affected. In King County alone, a severe pandemic flu could make 540,000 people ill, 270,000 would need outpatient care, over 59,000 would need hospitalization, and 11,500 could die.

High levels of illness and death during a pandemic could lead to other forms of social and economic disruption. With so many people in so many places becoming ill, caring for the ill, and looking after their children at home, the available workforce will be reduced. Impacts of a pandemic on everyday life may include school and business closings, the interruption of basic services such as public transportation and food delivery, and cancellation of large public gatherings.

How will it Impact Business?

Potential United States and King County Impacts:

The CDC predicts that that as much as 25% to 30% of the US population could be affected by a pandemic. Undoubtedly, a pandemic flu would be disruptive and costly to business. **Up to 35%**

of the workforce could be affected at any given time. The economic impact in the United States could reach \$166.5 billion.

King County alone could see 1.2 million people infected in the first 6 weeks; 245,000 - 612,000 clinically ill; 180,000 - 470,000 outpatient medical visits; 24,436 – 57,216 people hospitalized, and 600 – 2,700 deaths.

Absenteeism:

Absences from work will depend largely on the age group most affected by the virus. A quarter or more of the working population may have to take days off work at some stage during the pandemic. In addition to absence due to illness, some workers may need time off to care for family members or may have difficulty getting to work. Some workers may be in mourning.

Changes in Business Culture:

A person infected with the influenza virus can be contagious for 24 hours before the onset of symptoms, and for seven days thereafter, making it extremely easy for the virus to spread rapidly to large numbers of people.

Businesses may consider implementing telecommuting options to reduce the number of employees in the work place, and requiring employees who may be ill or are ill to stay home.

Continuity of Essential Business and Community Services:

A sudden and prolonged reduction in workforce numbers due to the impacts of pandemic flu may require some businesses to prioritize their essential business functions and temporarily suspend others.

Some business services may be more immediately in demand and necessary for preserving overall economic stability and community well-being, such as services and products that sustain everyday life and support the institutions people will turn to for help in a pandemic. (For example, grocery stores, banking services, medical supply delivery, etc.)

Movement of People, Goods and Services:

A flu pandemic will impact all business sectors through the illness itself and the consequences of staff sickness, travel restrictions, reduced transport and deliveries, etc.

Social Distancing to Reduce the Spread of Disease:

Strategies for slowing the spread of a severe influenza outbreak could include temporarily closing schools, sports arenas, theaters and other public gathering places and facilities.

Workforce Education:

Each pandemic is different and the impact on business cannot be fully established until more is known about how a pandemic is evolving. Business can begin now to encourage hygiene practices that may slow or stop the spread of germs.

What happened in the previous pandemics?

Previous pandemics affected large numbers of the population, caused many deaths and resulted in severe economic and social disruption.

Year	1918-1919	1957-1958	1968-1969
Flu type	'Spanish' Flu	'Asian' Flu	'Hong Kong' Flu
Likely origin	Uncertain (1st documented cases in Europe/USA)	China	China
Estimated deaths - Global	50 million	1 million	1 million
Estimated deaths - US	500,000	70,000	34,000

Protect Yourself, Your Family and Co-workers

Use the following checklist to reduce the impact of a severe influenza pandemic on you and your family. These steps are also good advice for other disasters, such as earthquake or flood.

At Home – Store water, food and other essentials

Prepare to get by for at least a week on what you have at home. You may be unable to get to a store, or stores may not be open or may have limited supplies for weeks. Public services may also be disrupted, so be prepared for outages in electricity, water and garbage services. Keep extra supplies on hand.

Examples of non-perishable food	Examples of other emergency supplies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Canned meats, such as tuna, chicken, turkey, Vienna sausage▪ Canned beans, fruits, vegetables, soups▪ Protein or fruit bars▪ Dry cereal or granola▪ Dried fruit▪ Peanut butter and jelly▪ Nuts and trail mix▪ Crackers▪ Comfort food, including cookies, candy, instant coffee, tea bags▪ Canned juices▪ Bottled water▪ Baby formula and canned or jarred baby food	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Pet food, cat litter▪ Disposable diapers▪ Feminine supplies▪ Flashlight▪ Portable radio▪ Batteries for flashlights, radios, games, thermometers▪ Manual can opener▪ Plastic garbage bags▪ Tissues and toilet paper▪ Entertainment - games, crafts, books, movies, etc.▪ Supplies for persons with special needs – the elderly or disabled▪ Some extra cash

Make a Household Emergency Plan

Be prepared to handle your own family's health care, if necessary. Medical facilities and health care providers may be overwhelmed and cannot take more patients.

Plan to limit the number of trips you take to shop or run errands. Limit your exposure to others. Remember that public transportation routes and times may be limited.

Think about who would take care of your children, or any disabled person in your family if schools are closed and support services are not available.

For general preparedness, agree on a point of contact where all family members can check-in if you are separated during any emergency.

Store Medical and Health Supplies

Get an extra supply of your regular prescription drugs. Keep health supplies and non-prescription drugs on hand.

- Prescribed medicines and supplies, such as glucose meters and blood-pressure monitoring equipment
- Soap and water
- Alcohol-based hand cleaner, such as Purell® or store-brand
- Medicines for fever and pain, such as acetaminophen and ibuprofen
- Diarrhea remedy, such as Pepto-Bismol® or Kaopectate® (not generally recommended for children)
- Throat lozenges
- Cough syrup containing Dextromethorphan
- Thermometer(s)
- Vitamins
- Fluids with electrolytes, like Gatorade® and Pedialyte® (preferred for small children)

To Stop Germs from Spreading

- Wash your hands frequently.
 - Wash thoroughly with warm water and soap for 20 seconds.
 - Make sure to wash your hands before eating, or touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
 - If caring for ill persons, wash hands after providing assistance.
 - Always wash your hands after sneezing, blowing your nose, or coughing, or after touching used tissues or handkerchiefs.
 - If hand washing is not possible, use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose and eyes.
- When coughing and sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with tissue, or cough and sneeze into your upper sleeve. Put used tissues in the trash.
- Don't share items such as cigarettes, towels, lipstick, toys or anything else that might be contaminated with germs.
- Don't share food, utensils or beverage containers with others.

Stay Home When You are Sick.

- See your health care provider as soon as you can if you have a cough and a fever, and follow their instructions, including taking medicine as prescribed and getting rest.
- If asked, use a mask when visiting your health care provider.
- [Visit Public Health's Stop Germs](http://www.metrokc.gov/health/stopgerms/index.htm) web site for more information and educational materials on stopping germs and staying healthy.
<http://www.metrokc.gov/health/stopgerms/index.htm>

Stay informed

The following web sites provide regularly updated information about bird flu and pandemic flu:

- [Public Health-Seattle & King County](http://www.metrokc.gov/health/index.htm)
<http://www.metrokc.gov/health/index.htm>
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](http://www.pandemicflu.gov/) (CDC)
<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/>
- Get this free guide: [Pandemic Influenza Planning: Guide for Individuals and Families](http://www.pandemicflu.gov/). The guide includes checklists and information on how to prepare for a potential pandemic. <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/>

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